

## UPDATE: POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS FOR LPNS

# HEU Licensed Practical Nurses secure important gains at senior policy tables

**2006 BARGAINING** was a turning point for LPNs as both union members and nursing professionals. Armed with a number of proposals to improve LPNs' nursing practice, HEU bargained hard for badly needed improvements. In addition to professional responsibility language and special wage adjustments, HEU secured a joint policy table for LPNs where they could advocate for their unique professional interests at the highest levels.

HEU LPNs now meet directly with senior officials from the health ministry, health authorities and the Health Employers Association of B.C. to advocate for recognition and support for LPNs' expanded roles in health care.

LPN Jacqueline Zilkie from HEU's Provincial Executive is a member of the Joint Policy Committee. She says the collaborative relationships that have been built at the policy table are moving the occupation forward.

"Meeting directly with senior representatives from government and employers has been a huge breakthrough for LPNs and the rest of the nursing team," she says. "We've had the opportunity to bring them into our world. We've educated them about what we do, what we're capable of doing, and the challenges we face on the floor."

Zilkie says the opportunity to advocate directly with government, management and other stakeholders has created an environment of mutual respect and understanding among all parties. "The relationships we are developing at the policy table are positive and collaborative. I'm very optimistic. I really believe the future has never been more positive for our profession."

In 2008, the Joint Policy Committee issued a ground-breaking report – *Effectively Utilizing B.C.'s Licensed Practical Nurses and Care Aides* – which acknowledges the importance of compensation issues for LPNs, and outlines both the barriers and opportunities to more effectively utilizing LPNs. It includes case studies and strategies for addressing problems that often arise as LPN roles change and/or as LPNs are introduced into new roles.

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### **SUPPORT FOR LPNS IN NEW ROLES**

Chief Nursing Officers have signed onto the recommendations of the Joint Policy Committee report on utilization, including: transition to practice opportunities for new LPNs; expanded professional development and educational opportunities; leadership training and leadership opportunities, and access to formal decision-making and collaborative practice initiatives.

### **LPN LEADERSHIP**

In some hospitals, LPNs sit on inter-professional practice councils. There are health authorities where LPNs meet regularly with the Chief Nursing Officer, and where new, full-time roles have been created for LPN mentors and clinical nurse leaders. HEU is working with its LPN reps to implement these practices province-wide.

### **COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE TOOLS**

The Joint Policy Committee has developed a tool kit to support LPNs and care aides to adapt some of the very effective, structured communications tools currently being used in acute care for residential care settings. These include SBAR and safety huddles. The tool kit is currently being pilot-tested, and will be available for distribution later this spring.

### **RESPONSIVE SHIFT SCHEDULING**

Responsive Shift Scheduling (RSS) is a collaborative approach for developing new schedules that require union and management participation. The Joint Policy Committee successfully piloted the process in six residential care sites around B.C., and found that responsive shift scheduling had a positive impact on staff morale. The next step will be making the process available as an option across the province this spring. A tool kit to support the process will be available on the employer and HEU websites.

### **TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Joint Policy Committee has supported several initiatives, including: \$3.5 million in designated professional development and specialty training for LPNs; development of new specialty roles for LPNs in areas like Renal, and a three-day leadership course delivered to 180 LPNs across the province.

In addition, about 200 LPNs have been financially supported for training by the union-negotiated and administered FBA Education Fund.

